MARVEL

022

SPURRIER
WALKER
DEERING
TARTAGLIA

STAR WARS™ DOCTOR APHRA

THE CATASTROPHE CON
Part III

Rogue archaeologist Doctor Aphra's betrayal of the murderous protocol droid Triple-Zero may have allowed her to escape its clutches, but her criminal exploits have landed Aphra in the Imperial Accresker Jail!

Now, the warden's interrogations threaten to expose Aphra's deepest secrets, including what she learned of Darth Vader's plans for the Empire! Horrified that Vader will come for her, Aphra has hatched an escape plan — by revealing the Sith Lord's secret to her current flame, Magna Tolvan, and blackmailing her into a rescue operation.

And Vader isn't Aphra's only problem. The Rebels have hired Sana Starros to capture her! But the good doctor just can't resist making off with a little loot — right in the middle of Tolvan's escape attempt. . . .

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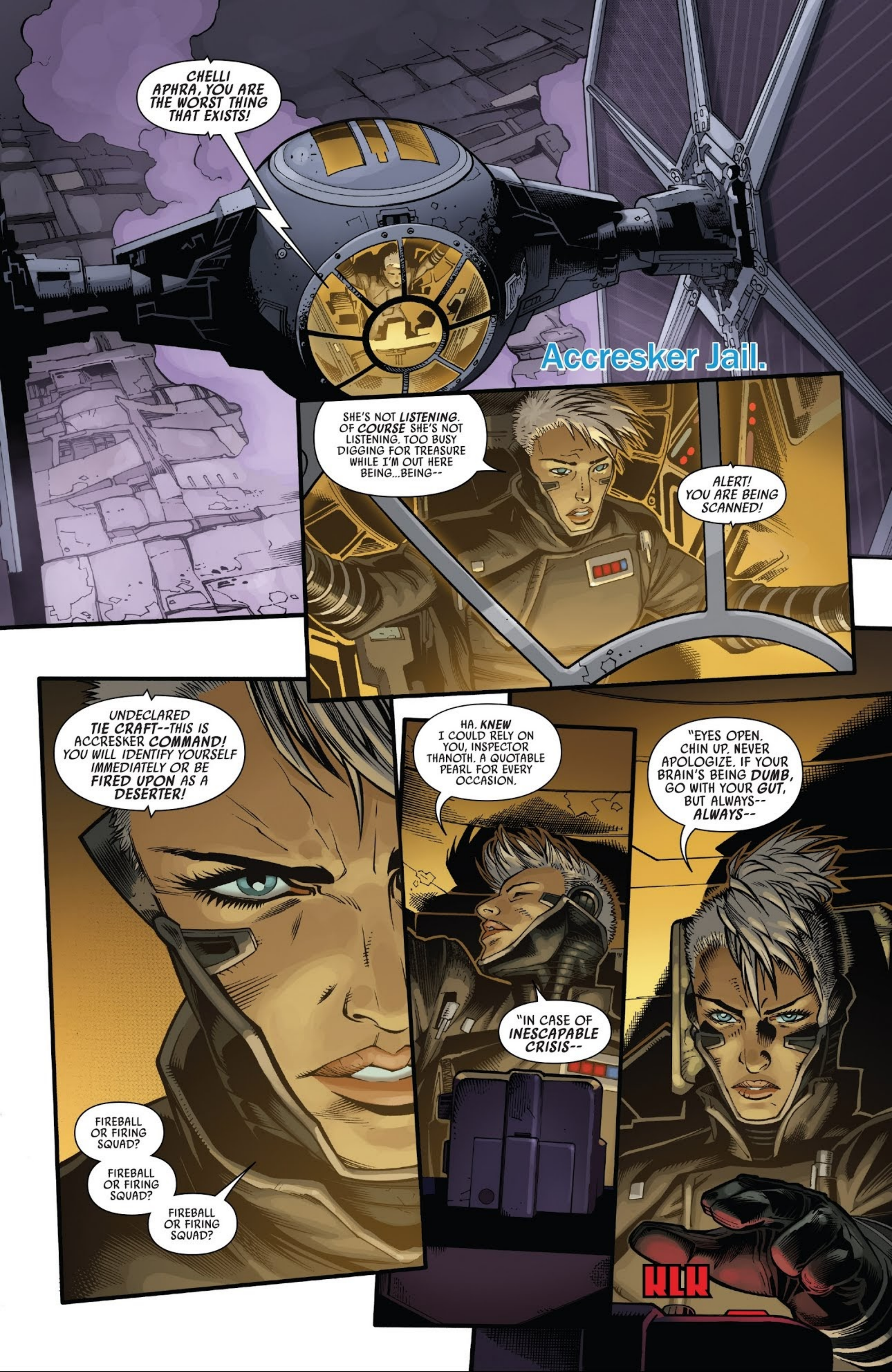
Deep Space.
MISSION LOG OF BOUNTY HUNTER TAM POSLA. CURRENT TARGET--
DOCTOR CORNELIUS EVAZAN.
DAY 421. THE SO-CALLED MUTILATOR OF MILVAYNE REMAINS AT LARGE. HIS FACE HAUNTS MY DREAMS.
YESTERDAY I KICKED ANOTHER INFORMANT TO DEATH FOR LYING ABOUT HIS WHEREABOUTS--BRINGING THE TOTAL TO SIX.
IN THE INTERESTS OF MENTAL EQUILIBRIUM, I HAVE DECIDED TO TEMPORARILY ADJUST TO A LESS...HANDS-ON STRATEGY.
AS ALWAYS I AM ACCOMPANIED BY MY PARTNER, CAYSIN BOG, WHO--
HMP.
AN ASIDE: I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE MY PARTNER'S DEATH WAS CATALYZED BY THE ROGUE ARCHAEOLOGIST WHO LED OUR LAST OPERATION.
ONE DAY I WILL FIND HER AND CUT OUT HER HEART. SLOWLY. BUT FOR NOW...

FOCUS.
HRRR.
FOCUS. ONE INSANE DEVIANT AT A TIME.
FOR NOW, EVAZAN COMES FIRST.
I KNOW HE ESCAPED JEDHA. I KNOW HE WAS IN A SCUFFLE ON TATOOINE. I KNOW HE INFILTRATED A BIOFARM ON THANNT.
BUT THE TRAIL'S BEEN COLD A MONTH. HIS EGO'S NEVER KEPT HIM OFF-GRID THIS LONG.
I CONCLUDE HE'S EITHER DEAD--OR INCARCERATED.
I AM THEREFORE SCANNING ALL TRANSMISSIONS NEAR IMPERIAL CUSTODIAL FACILITIES, IN THE HOPES OF A POSITIVE I.D.
I KNOW IT'S A FORLORN HOPE--A BURR SEED IN BANTHA DUNG--BUT I MUST TRY.
THERE IS NO CREATURE MORE FOUL IN ALL THE GALAXY THAN THE FIEND I SEEK.



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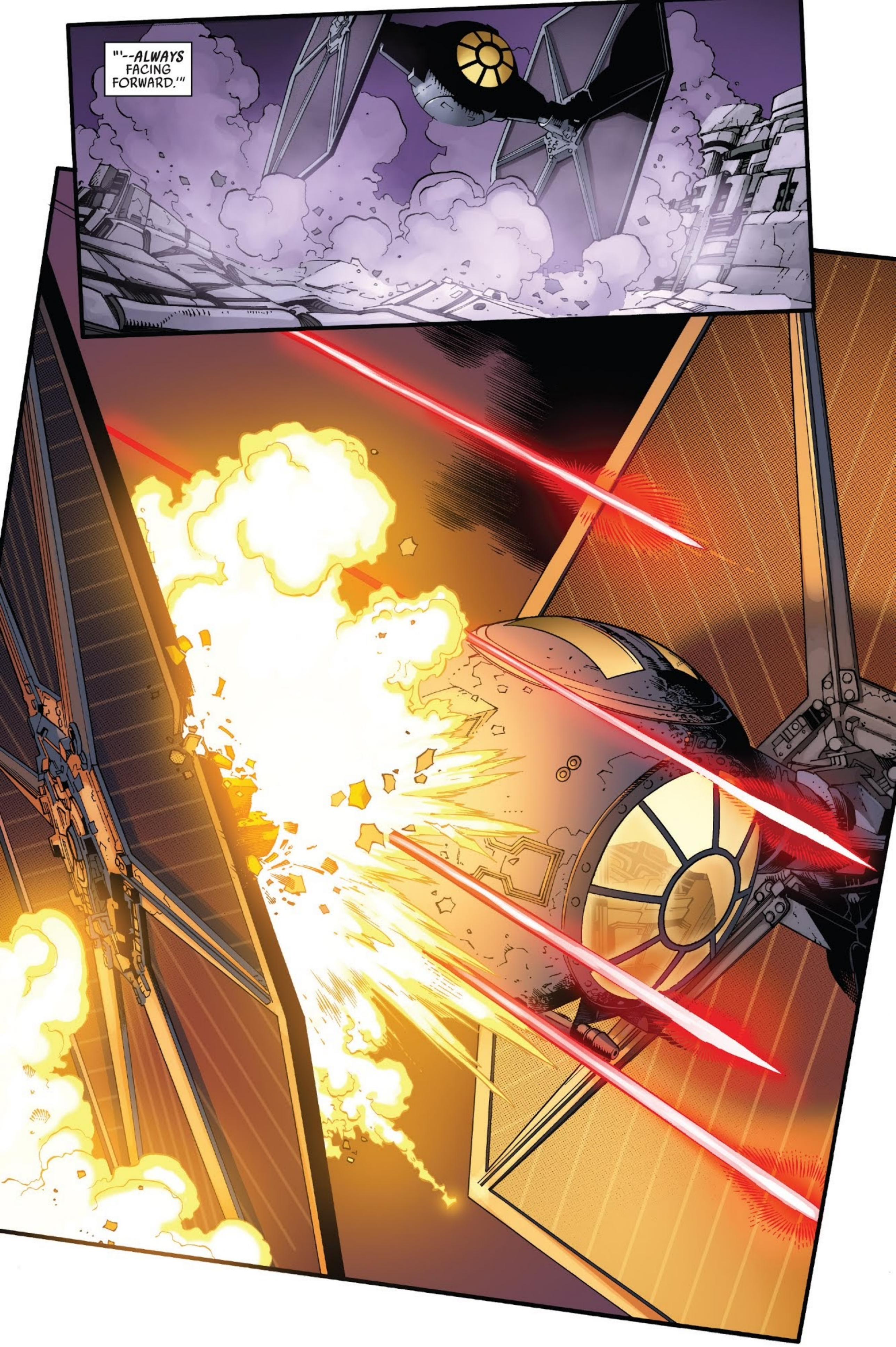
"'--ALWAYS FACING FORWARD.'"

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RUMBLE RUMBLE
WH-WHAT D'YOU THINK'S GOING ON UP THERE, APHRA?
LOPSET-- SERIOUSLY.
WHO CARES?

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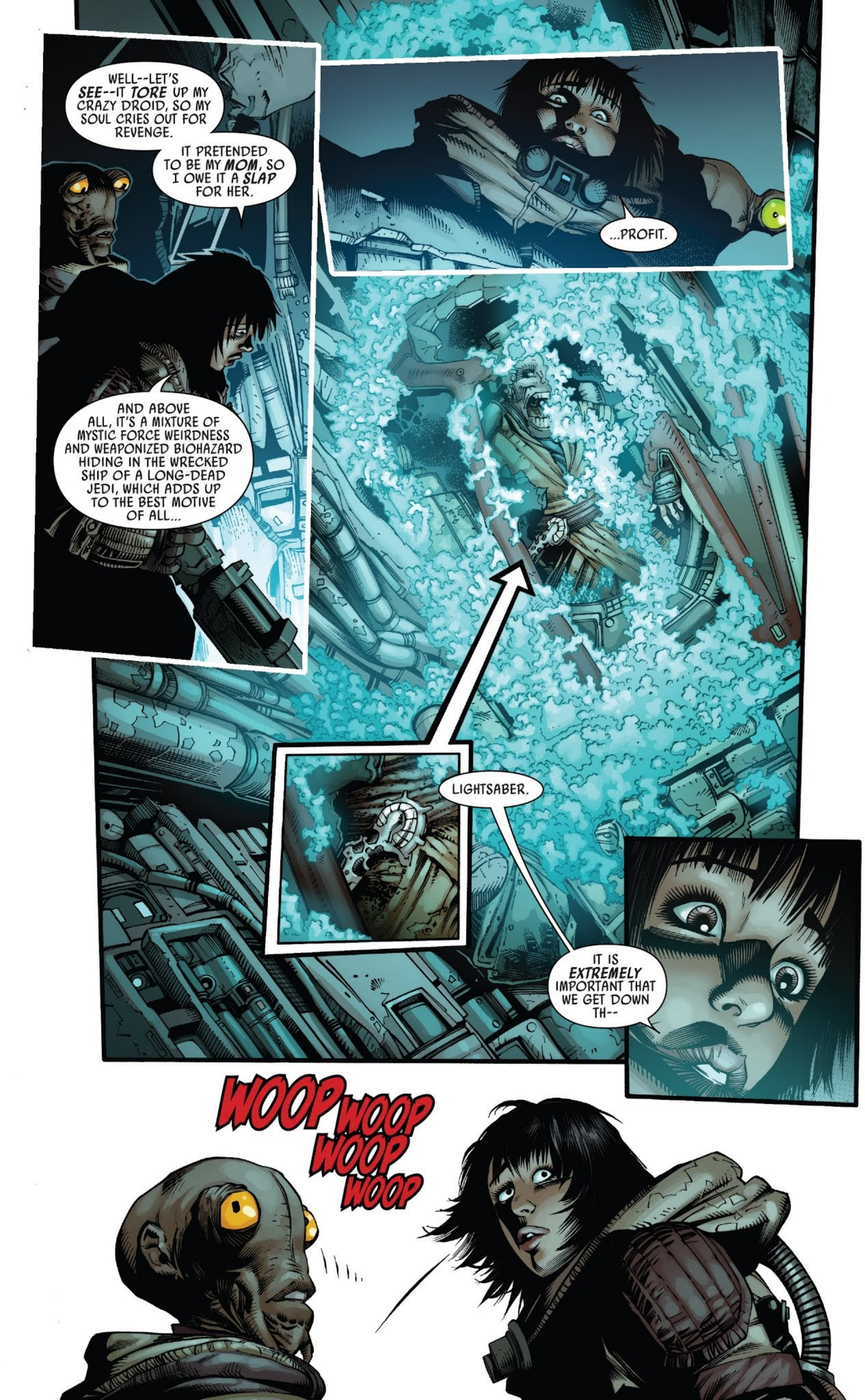
THE UNWORTHY SHALL BE DIGESTED.
H-H-HOOKSPORES! GUNDRAVIAN HOOKSPORES!
IT'S THE MOST EXQUISITELY INFECTIOUS SAPROPHYTE THERE IS! W-WE'RE DEAD! WE'RE DEAD WE'RE DEAD W--
SHUT UP AND BLAST IT! I BET SPACE MOLD FRIES AS GOOD AS ANYTHING!
B-B-BUT IT DOESN'T! IT'S ALMOST INDESTRUCTIBLE!
OH YEAH?
THEN HOW COME IT'S RETREATING?
I--I DON'T KNOW! Y-YOU CAN'T INTIMIDATE A RAVENOUS FUNGUS! IT HAS NO BRAIN! W-WE SHOULD BE COUGHING UP OUR OWN GUTS BY NOW!
MAYBE IT'S TRYING TO PROTECT SOMETHING ELSE?
BY THE WAY-- "EXQUISITELY INFECTIOUS"? THOUGHT YOU WERE AN ELECTRICIAN, LOPSET.
I'M...I'M MULTIDISCIPLINARY.
L-LOOK-- WE JUST PICKED A FIGHT WITH A-A-A HAUNTED MUSHROOM! WHY AREN'T WE RUNNING?


WELL--LET'S SEE--IT TORE UP MY CRAZY DROID, SO MY SOUL CRIES OUT FOR REVENGE.
IT PRETENDED TO BE MY MOM, SO I OWE IT A SLAP FOR HER.
...PROFIT.
AND ABOVE ALL, IT'S A MIXTURE OF MYSTIC FORCE WEIRDNESS AND WEAPONIZED BIOHAZARD HIDING IN THE WRECKED SHIP OF A LONG-DEAD JEDI, WHICH ADDS UP TO THE BEST MOTIVE OF ALL...
LIGHTSABER.
IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT WE GET DOWN TH--
WOOP WOOP WOOP WOOP

ALL INMATES: ATTEND! BOARDING ACTION IS CONCLUDED!
ALL PRISONERS WILL DISARM AND RETURN TO THEIR BERTHS OR EXPLOSIVE IMPLANTS WILL TRIGGER!
IMPERIAL STOOGE!
REBEL FOOL!
I WON'T LET YOU KILL THAT WOMAN!
WAIT--
--WHAT?
ALERT! OXYGEN FIELD WITHDRAWING TO REGULAR PERIMETER!
I--I'VE GOT THE DROID'S CPU! THAT'S WHERE THEY PUT THE PROXIMITY CHIP, RIGHT?
REMIND ME TO BE RELIEVED ABOUT NOT HEADSPLODING WHEN WE'RE THROUGH NOT SUFFOCATING, OKAY? JUST RUN!

WAIT. STOP. THAT WRECK--I-IT CAN'T BE...
HEEEF! HEEF! HEEF!
HEEF! HEEF!
TSK. SLOPPY.
TOLVAN?! C-CAPTAIN SNUGGLES? I-IS THAT YOU?
LOOK, I'M SURE YOU'RE MAD, B-BUT-- WE'VE JUST BEEN THROUGH SOME WEIRD STUFF, SIR, A-AND NOW I'M SEEING DEBRIS FROM A CRAPPY OLD SHIP MY INSANE EX, SANA STARROS, USED TO FLY.
I THINK THIS PLACE IS MESSING WITH MY HEAD. I-IF YOU COULD PLEASE JUST CALL IN THAT SEXY GETAWAY TIE FIGHTER, WE CAN--

ALL PRISONERS-- ATTEND!
COMBAT HAS ENDED! INMATES MUST DISARM!
HOLD IT. WE'RE NOT DAMN INM--
DISARM AND RETURN TO YOUR BERTH OR FACE IMMEDIATE DISINTEGRATION!
NOT YOU!
WH--?
SCHEDULED INTERROGATION SESSION IMMINENT!
NO, WAIT, I'M NOT READY!
"CAPTAIN SNUGGLES"?
"EX"?
AWKWARD.

ADORABLE.
BOR IFRIEM SEEMS TO LIKE YOU.

YOU SHOULD KNOW--HE FEEDS ON RESISTANCE. THE HARDER YOU FIGHT, THE STRONGER HIS EMBRACE.
EMOTIONAL FLAGELLATION IS THE GIFT OF THE MAIRAN RACE, INMATE.
"ALL THE SINS YOU'VE COMMITTED. ALL THE GUILT AND SHAME. THAT'S THE ANVIL THE BOR BREAKS ITS PREY AGAINST.
"CONFESSION IS THE ONLY RELIEF YOU WILL FIND."
I'VE...I'VE...I'VE BEEN THUH...THINKING AB-AB-ABOUT...ABOUT MY MOM...
TRUTH.
HA. A TRANSPARENT ATTEMPT TO DISSUADE US WITH TRIVIALITIES.
YOU KNOW, THE BOR CAN DO FAR MORE THAN MERELY EXTRACT MEMORIES, INMATE.
"HE COULD DELETE YOUR MOTHER, AT OUR COMMAND.
"HE COULD REWRITE HER. CHANGE HER INTO A DEVIL. PROPAGANDIZE YOUR VERY CHILDHOOD.
"HE COULD LEAVE YOU UNABLE TO TRUST THE VERACITY OF ANYTHING WITHIN YOUR OWN MIND."
THAT'S WHY EVERYONE GIVES IN TO THE BOR. NOT TO MAKE THE PAIN STOP.
BUT SO THERE'S SOMETHING LEFT OF YOU AFTERWARDS.

...A SH-SH-*SHAAAPE*. SHAPE FORMING...

NO NO NO-- S-S-*SECRET*.

D-D-DEADLY SECRET.

RELAX, INMATE. RESISTANCE IS PAIN. LET THE SHAPE *FORM*. TELL US.

"WHAT *IS* IT?"

D...D... DAR...

DISEASE!

HOOKSPORES! A COLONY OF *HOOKSPORES!* SUPER INFECTIOUS!

IT'S GROWING RIGHT INSIDE THE *JAIL!* I-I-IT'LL INFECT US *ALL* AND NEVER STOP!

TH-*THAT'S* MY SECRET!

...

SHE'S, UH.

DAMN.

SHE'S TELLING THE *TRUTH*, SIR.

"IT'S *TRUE*, GENERAL SYNDULLA."

I'M SORRY. WE LOGGED A DETONATION ABOARD THE VOLT COBRA. NO CONTACT WITH SANA STARROS SINCE.
HM. HAND ME THE COMMS, BINI.
Lucrehulk Prime.

OPERATIVE KNAVE-1, THIS IS REBEL COMMAND--DID YOU FIND HER?
I INSIST YOU REPORT IN! SANA? REPORT IN, BLAST IT!

DID YOU FIND THAT BLACKMAILING, TECH-TINKERING TOMB-TOSSING, QUEEN OF ALL SHE-DEVILS?!
HM.

LOG: ADDITIONAL--
POTENTIAL REFERENCE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGIST. SOMETHING TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER ONCE I'VE FOUND EVAZAN.

ALSO--SIDENOTE--THE SCANNING EQUIPMENT HAS ALREADY PROVED VALUABLE.
I MUST REMEMBER TO COMMEND THE DROID ON SON-TUUL WHO SOLD ME THIS VESSEL.

IN MY EXPERIENCE, PEOPLE ARE GLAD TO HEAR OF IT WHEN THEY'VE AIDED THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE--

--AND HE SEEMED LIKE A DECENT FELLOW.
Somewhere. Listening.
--POTENTIAL REFERENCE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGIST--
--POTENTIAL REFERENCE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGIST--
--POTENTIAL REFERENCE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGIST--
--POTENTIAL REFERENCE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGIST--
--POTENTIAL REFERENCE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGIST--

Accresker Jail.
HMPH.
THIS IS SO TYPICAL OF HER.
ALSO AWKWARD.
L-LISTEN, YOU WANT MY ADVICE? TAKE COMFORT FROM BEING AT ROCK BOTTOM.
PLACE LIKE THIS, THAT'S ALL WE'VE GOT. LIKE, AT LEAST IT CAN'T GET ANY WORSE. RIGHT?
WHOOP WHOOP
SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT! ALL INMATES WILL ATTEND!

THIS FACILITY HAS BEEN INFECTED BY A BIOTOXIN.
TO AVOID CONTAMINATION, IT IS HEREBY DECOMMISSIONED.
ALL DROIDS HAVE BEEN RECALLED, AND PROXIMITY BOMBS DISARMED.
THE JAIL WILL NOW BE PROPELLED ON A COLLISION TRAJECTORY AT A REBEL PLANET.
PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT YOUR FIERY VAPORIZATION WILL AID THE COMMON GOOD OF THE GALACTIC EMPIRE.
FWOP
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.
OOPS.
To Be Continued!

DOCTOR APHRA
NEXT ISSUE:

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think – and we want to hear from you! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com if you want to make it onto a future letters page. Don't forget to mark your notes "OKAY TO PRINT."